



STATE OF IOWA

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Iowa Drug Report Points to Progress, Emerging Challenges

DES MOINES – The 2012 Iowa Drug Control Strategy submitted by the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) to Governor Terry Branstad and the Iowa Legislature highlights significant progress to reduce some forms of substance abuse. However, the annual report also stresses the need to more effectively address the increasing abuse of prescription drugs and other emerging drugs.

"According to the latest state and national trends, alcohol and tobacco use by Iowa youth continues a decade-long decline, and Iowa has the lowest overall rate of illicit drug use in the nation," said Mark Schouten, Iowa's Drug Policy Coordinator and Director of ODCP. "Perseverance is required to build on this success to make our state safer for all Iowans, and we must work together to prevent the growth of newer types of substance abuse, involving prescription medicines and synthetic designer drugs."

The most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports Iowa had the lowest rate (4.1%) of illicit drug use in the nation in 2007-2008. Recently released Iowa Youth Survey results show the rate of current alcohol use among 11th graders dropped to 32 percent in 2010, down 17 points from 1999. The same survey shows the rate of current tobacco use by 11th graders declined 16 points during that same period, to 22 percent. The rate of current illicit drug use by Iowa youth decreased one point over the last decade, to 18 percent last year. The survey finds 13 percent of Iowa high school juniors are current marijuana users, while seven percent said they had abused prescription drugs.

"Despite gains in some areas, underage and youth binge drinking in Iowa still rank above the national average, marijuana is the illicit drug most used by youth and medicine abuse is a rising concern," said Schouten. "Preventing youth from abusing all forms of drugs must be a priority, because if we can keep our children drug-free that greatly reduces the odds they will ever engage in substance abusing behavior."

Data on the newer synthetic designer drugs legally banned in Iowa this past summer are not available, but anecdotal reports indicate synthetic cannabinoids (a.k.a., K2) and synthetic cathinones (a.k.a. bath salts) continue to be used by youth, with some users requiring hospital treatment.

“Complacency is not an option, because increasing numbers of potentially dangerous drugs—including diverted medicines and other unknown substances that may be perceived as safe—are now available to new generations of children who come of age and are tempted to try them,” said Schouten. “Parents play an important role, along with professionals, in teaching kids not to use any drug that hasn’t been given to them by a trusted parent, physician or pharmacist.”

ODCP recently convened a task force of physicians, pharmacists, substance abuse providers, law enforcement and other professionals to examine prescription drug abuse in Iowa, and a state plan for addressing the problem is slated to be released by year’s end.

Other Iowa findings in the ODCP report:

Drug overdose deaths from opioids, including the prescription painkillers hydrocodone and oxycodone, increased more than 1,233% from three in 2000 to 40 in 2009. Source: Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Methamphetamine (meth) use remains strong. The number of Iowans entering treatment primarily for meth use increased for the third straight year in 2011, coinciding with similar rebounds in reports of meth labs and meth-related prison admissions. Meth labs are on target to reach 343 for calendar year 2011, or nearly twice the recent annual low of 178 in 2007, but still almost 80 percent below the 1,500 recorded in 2004, immediately prior to enactment of Iowa’s law restricting the sale of meth’s key ingredient—pseudoephedrine—to behind pharmacy counters. Sources: Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Behavioral Health; Department of Public Safety, Division of Narcotics Enforcement.

Since the September 2010 launch of Iowa’s electronic Pseudoephedrine Tracking System (PTS) that links pharmacies selling pseudoephedrine to deter meth production, more than 21,000 purchase attempts have been blocked, preventing the illegal acquisition of enough pseudoephedrine to make approximately 113 pounds of meth, and averting as many as 450 additional meth labs in the first year of the system’s operation. Source: Iowa Office of Drug Control Policy, Pseudoephedrine Tracking System.

Substance abuse treatment is working even better now than ten years ago. Iowa’s 2010 Outcomes Monitoring System report says 57 percent of substance abuse treatment clients remained substance-free six months after treatment, a 14 point improvement in the rate of successful treatment outcomes compared to 2000. Source: Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Evaluation and Research.

The complete 2012 Iowa Drug Control Strategy is available on ODCP’s website (www.iowa.gov/odcp). Iowans needing additional information on substance abuse, or immediate assistance, may call the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center 24/7 toll-free helpline at 1-866-242-4111.